2003-2004

Friday, October 17, 2003, 8 p.m.
MacMillan Theatre

University of Toronto
Faculty of Music
Presents

# University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra and L'Orchestre symphonique du Conservatoire de musique de Montréal

## Raffi Armenian, conductor

**PROGRAMME**

**Bela Bartók**
1881-1945

Concerto for Orchestra
- Introduzione–Andante non troppo
- Giuoco delle coppie–Allegro scherzando
- Elegia–Andante, non troppo
- Intermezzo Interrotto–Allegretto
- Finale–Pesante

INTERMISSION

**Richard Strauss**
1864-1949

Also sprach Zarathustra, Op. 30
- Introduction
- Of the Dwellers in the Beyond-World
- Of the Great Yearning
- Of Joys And Passions
- Funeral Song
- Of Science
- The Convalescent
- The Dance-Song
- Night Wanderer's Song

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# Programme Notes

**Concerto for Orchestra**
BÉLA BARTÓK
*Born in Nagyszentmiklós, Hungary, 1881*
*Died in New York, 1945*

Béla Bartók's time in the United States is in many ways an unhappy final chapter in the life of a great artist. But without it, several of his finest works – including *the Concerto for Orchestra* – would never have been written.

By 1940, Bartók had achieved national and international success as a composer, pianist and ethnomusicologist. He held prestigious positions at the Budapest's Liszt Academy of Music and also the Academy of Arts and Science; he had performed throughout continental Europe, as well as England, the Soviet Union and the USA; and he had collected thousands of folk-songs, travelling on research expeditions as far as North Africa. But with the outbreak of World War II, he and his wife, the pianist Ditta Pasztory, chose to leave their native Hungary rather than live under Nazi rule.

The Bartóks traveled to New York City, and the composer soon obtained a modest position at Columbia University, transcribing recordings of Serbo-Croatian folksongs. But he had difficulty adjusting to life in the United States: he was unable to compose in his new environment, and a proposed appointment to a mid-Western university fell through. When the project at Columbia was completed, his financial situation became precarious and his health soon began to deteriorate. In 1943 he was hospitalized, eventually to be diagnosed with leukemia. Ironically, only then did the American musical world take an interest in him: the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) paid his medical bills, and he received commissions from several prominent musicians.

One of these was the flamboyant conductor Serge Koussevitzky, who asked him to write a new orchestral work for his Boston Symphony Orchestra. That summer, on the advice of his doctors, Bartók took up residence in a cottage in the town of Saranac Lake, in New York State's Adirondack Mountains. Here – in surroundings not unlike the Hungarian villages that were dear to him – his health improved somewhat, and he found he could compose once again. He set about his appointed task, writing his five-movement *Concerto for Orchestra* in less than two months.

Concerning the work, the composer wrote: "The title of this symphony-like orchestral work is explained by its tendency to treat the single orchestral instruments in a *concertant* or soloistic manner." The piece is symmetrical, with its outer movements – the brooding "Introduzione" and the dazzling "Finale" – written in sonata form; and a slow but dramatic stands "Elegia" at the work's centre. The second and fourth movements are lighter in character: the "Giuoco delle coppie" ("Game of Pairs") features wind instruments playing in tandem; and the "Intermezzo interrotto" ("Interupted Intermezzo") contains a quotation from Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 7* that breaks off in a snide orchestral "raspberry." Throughout, the musical style is infused with the spirit of Central-Europe, without quoting directly from folk sources.

Bartók's illness prevented him from attending the premiere of his *Concerto for Orchestra*, but he was able to attend a later performance, where he was warmly received by an audience in Boston's Symphony Hall. Today, the piece remains a final high-water-mark in the tradition of orchestral composition.

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October 16, 2003

To the members of the Orchestra:

I am pleased to extend my best wishes to all of you and your director, Professor Raffi Armenian on the occasion of your second appearance at the University of Toronto as a joint student symphony orchestra.

The ongoing partnership between our Faculty of Music and the Montreal Conservatoire allows you to demonstrate your individual musicianship and your collective dedication to the art form. Your preparation on this program will provide you with experience you can draw upon during your professional careers. You will create beautiful music as well as new friendships and memories.

I wish you great success for your concerts in Toronto and in Montreal this weekend.

Yours sincerely,

Bob Birgeneau

Robert J. Birgeneau

RJB/cgc

FACULTY of MUSIC
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

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David W. Beach
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Edward Johnson Building
80 Queen's Park Crescent
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Canada, M5S 2C5

It is with great pleasure that I welcome the students of the Conservatoire de Musique de Montréal to the University of Toronto's Faculty of Music. Once again, the combination of the most talented students from both institutions will produce an evening of great music.

In 2001-2002, the joint performance of Mahler's Sixth Symphony won critical reviews in both Toronto and Montreal. We are very pleased to see the continuation of this cultural exchange, not only for the benefit of our students but for our patrons, as well.

Opportunities such as this require not only the active participation of the students but the generous support of our sponsors and *Friends of the Faculty of Music* who recognize the importance of collaboration and the rewards it brings to our young musicians.

On behalf of everyone at the Faculty of Music, I thank you all for your dedication to the music of Bartók and Strauss and for making these concerts a tremendous success.

David Beach

David W. Beach
Dean

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Dear audience members,

It gives me great pleasure to relive the magnificent experience that this orchestra embodies, with its combined talents of students from our two institutions. It enables young musicians to live some very special moments, and audiences in Montreal and Toronto to attend concerts of very high quality indeed. It is already two years since our first collaboration, and the memory of an exceptional concert is still fresh in my memory. What comes spontaneously to mind is not just the high musical level attained but the enthusiasm of everyone involved. And once again we are privileged to observe that the pooling of efforts of students from different schools and cities, students inspired by a single passion, can provoke extremely stimulating exchanges. My hope is that the presentation of this second concert is part of what will be prove to be a long tradition. Bravo and thanks to all those who through their efforts have made it possible.

Nicolas Desjardins
Executive Director, Conservatoire de musique
et d'art dramatique du Québec

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Conservatoire de musique de Montréal

What a pleasure to be back in Toronto, especially after the success of our first joint concert project in February 2002.

Our young musicians are enjoying an unforgettable experience this week, one that will wind up on Sunday when the members of the University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra and those of the Conservatoire de musique de Montréal join forces once again to present the two monumental works we'll be hearing tonight – on that occasion to a Montreal audience in the Saint-Jean-Baptiste church.

I wish to congratulate and extend my heartfelt thanks to all those who made it possible for this magnificent project to come to fruition, and who are surely very proud of their achievements. I'm thinking particularly of Raffi Armenian, who conducts the two orchestras during the academic year and without whom the project would not have taken place; and, of course, of all our young musicians from Québec and Ontario who are on stage this evening to share their love of music with us. I would also thank the Dean of the Faculty of Music of the University of Toronto, Dr. David W. Beach, and his entire team for their kind cooperation, as well as the staff of the Conservatoire de musique de Montréal.

In this sixtieth-anniversary year of the Conservatoire de musique et d'art dramatique du Québec, we take pride in our continued ability to prepare projects as large in scale as this one, and we hope that the collaboration between our two institutions will endure as well.

Isolde Lagacé
Director
Conservatoire de musique de Montréal

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**The Conservatoire de musique de Montréal** opened its doors in March 1943, in light of an act passed in May 1942 that created the Conservatoire de musique et d'art dramatique du Québec and thanks to the sustained efforts of Wilfrid Pelletier – a conductor of renown, a highly regarded educator and an impassioned promoter of the musical talents of his native Québec. The Conservatoire de musique de Montréal became the very first public school in North America devoted to the study of music.

Sixty years after its founding, the Conservatoire remains one of the brightest jewels in Québec's crown. Within the walls of this great school, which has no equivalent on the continent, creativity achieves its potential and our cultural life is enriched by performers who are among the most highly endowed and best trained. It comprises a true nursery, whose youthful talents nourish our symphony orchestras, our chamber music ensembles and our opera stages.

The CMM is one of a network of nine institutions where music and the dramatic arts are taught, these being distributed over seven regions in Québec. Students receive complete training, one in which they study every facet of their calling and at the same time are led to develop qualities without which they cannot succeed in an enthralling but demanding discipline: perseverance, intense work habits, and a commitment to excellence and to exceeding expectations.

The four study cycles, from the preparatory through the upper level, play host to about 220 students, who are chosen through competition in performance, in conducting, in composition or in electro-acoustic composition. Primary admission criteria are talent and the likelihood of a career either as a performer before the public or as a composer. Teaching is carried out by more than 60 instructors, all of them well known on the musical scene.

The Conservatoire de musique de Montréal presents about 500 concerts a year in roughly 20 different venues. Through them, through the talents of its graduates, its current students and those responsible for their guidance, the Conservatoire offers as vibrant a portrait as possible of the quality of the training it provides.

# Imagine Perfect Resonance.

## A chord is struck, but never fades, sustained forever.

Kenneth Peacock was a distinguished alumnus of the University of Toronto's Faculty of Music. His body of work, as a composer and researcher for half a century, has made a significant impact on musical life in Canada. The Faculty of Music was very grateful to learn that Mr. Peacock had made a bequest to the University of Toronto in his will for the benefit of our music programs. With this legacy gift, the Faculty of Music will establish the Kenneth H. Peacock Lecture Series in Music in keeping with his lifelong interest in and contribution to the multi-dimensional study of music. Thank you Mr. Peacock.

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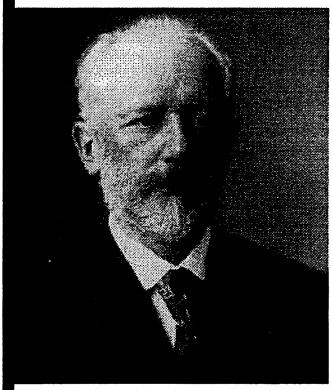

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Brahms: Variations on a Theme by Haydn
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Raffi Armenian, Conductor

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Mary Beth Brown
Jennifer Burford
Émilie Caron
Sonia Coppey, *Concertmaster* (Strauss)
Lizann Gervais
Sharon Lee
Amélia Lockwell
Elizabeth Loewen
Hannah Min
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Livia Papadhimitri
Émilie Paré
Philippe Prévost
Laura Reid, *Concertmaster* (Bartók)
Eri Yamamoto

**Violin II**
Lyne Allard
Marjorie Aumont
Stéphanie Beauparlant
Rebecca Benstead
Liana Berube
Josiane Breault
Tanya Charles
Caroline Chéhadé, *Principal* (Strauss)
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Caroline Milot, *Principal* (Strauss)
Oleksander Mycyk
Philippe Roy-Fleming
Seung Young Song
Sarah Steeves

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Mathieu Désy
Jean-Christian Houde, *Principal* (Strauss)
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Ling-Fei Kang
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**Trombone**
Jason De Carufel, *Principal* (Bartók, Strauss)
Alexandre Gagnier, *Bass trombone*
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*As of September 17, 2003*

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**Also sprach Zarathustra, Op. 30**
RICHARD STRAUSS
*Born in Munich, 1864*
*Died in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, West Germany, 1949*

Richard Strauss was born into a musical family of conservative tastes, and his earliest compositional efforts reveal a grounding in traditional values. But following his university studies in philosophy and art history, Strauss met the violinist and poet Alexander Ritter, who converted the young composer to the aesthetic ideals of Richard Wagner. From this point forward, Strauss built his musical works on a Wagnerian foundation of brilliant orchestration, chromatic complexity and "endless" melody.

In 1896, when Richard Strauss completed *Also sprach Zarathustra (Thus Spake Zarathustra)*, he was an accomplished master of programmatic music, having already penned five tone-poems. Indeed, it was his essays in the genre that led to his fame: in 1889, his tone-poem *Don Juan* caused a *scandale* at its premiere that made his name known throughout Europe and filled him with confidence. "I am on the road I want to take," he wrote, "fully conscious that there never has been an artist not considered crazy by thousands of his fellow men."

But although Strauss's ego was robust, his physical health was not. And while convalescing in 1892, he read Friedrich Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra*, a philosophical-poetic work fancifully connected to the ancient Persian religious leader Zoroaster. In choosing the book as a subject for a tone-poem, Strauss was breaking entering a new territory: most programmatic compositions from the Romantic era were inspired by narrative or visual imagery, but a tone-poem based on a philosophical text was unprecedented. Explaining his intentions, Strauss wrote that his goal was to "convey in music the idea of mankind's development . . . culminating in Nietzsche's concept of the superman."

Following an "Introduction" that needs no introduction (thanks to its famous use in Stanley Kubrick's film *2001: A Space Odyssey*), the lengthy work continues in eight sections, whose titles are taken from chapters in Nietzche's book. The mysterious and lyrical "Of the Dwellers in the Beyond-World," leads to an expansive and agitated "Of the Great Yearning," culminating in the forceful, brassy "Of Joys and Passions." A contrast is achieved in the fourth section, "Funeral Song," with its plaintive chromatic lines; and the central section, "Of Science," is an elaborate fugato, beginning softly in the cellos and basses, and growing throughout the orchestra. "The Convalescent" continues contrapuntally, building to grand statement of the opening motif – and then a sudden, giddy outpouring of chirping flutes and swirling strings. The eighth section, "Dance-Song" recalls (or rather presages) Strauss' waltz music for *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* and *Der Rosenkavalier* – its simple, diatonic melodies belying its sophisticated orchestration. Bells announce the final section, "Night Wanderer's Song," which gradually dies away in lyrical tranquility.

*Also Sprach Zarathustra* was premiered in Frankfurt in November 1896 under the baton of its composer, who subsequently conducted it in numerous European cities. Despite the misgivings of some critics, such as Vienna's Eduard Hanslick, the work was a popular success.

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# Biography

Director of Orchestral Studies at the University of Toronto, **Raffi Armenian** was trained in the European tradition. In Vienna he studied piano, conducting, voice and composition with Bruno Seidlhofer, Hans Swarowsky, Ferdinand Grossmann and Alfred Uhl respectively.

Maestro Armenian has conducted a television version of Menotti's *The Medium* which was nominated for an Emmy Award that season. He received a Juno nomination for a recording of Ravel and Schoenberg with one of Canada's great singers, Maureen Forrester, and the Canadian Chamber Ensemble, which he founded. In 1988, The CCE was awarded the Grand Prix du Disque from the Canadian Music Council for its *Serenades* album, which was subsequently nominated for a Juno Award. Repertoire from the Ensemble's *Music from Berlin in the 1920s* was selected by Woody Allen to underscore his film *Shadows and Fog*.

Sought after as a guest conductor, Mr. Armenian has led the Belgian Radio Orchestra, the Enescu Philharmonic of Bucharest at the Ravenna International Music Festival, the Montreal Symphony, the Winnipeg Symphony, the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra, l'Orchestre symphonique de Québec, the Edmonton Symphony, the Hamilton Philharmonic and Violon du Roy.

Maestro Armenian held the position of Music Director of the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony for 22 years and worked with such illustrious companies as the Canadian Opera Company, Michigan Opera Theater, l'Opéra de Montréal, Opera Columbus and for the famed Indiana University School of Music. Kitchener-Waterloo's acoustically superb "Centre in the Square" has a main theatre named Raffi Armenian Theatre. The design was strongly influenced by Maestro Armenian.

The Armenian legacy is secured by his highly acclaimed performance of Wagner's *Parsifal* in which tenor Jon Vickers made his final appearance in 1989. He recently conducted *La Belle Hélène* at l'Opéra de Québec and Mozart's *Così fan tutte* with Opera Hamilton. Mr. Armenian is a recipient of the Order of Canada and Honorary Doctorates from Wilfrid Laurier University and the University of Waterloo. ■